

Would Emotionally Intelligent Service Employees Stay Longer? The Moderating Role of Internal Service Climate

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Employee turnover intention is huge challenge for employers, especially in the highly stressful service industry. This study surveyed 1,236 front-line casino employees across 29 organizations in Macau, the Casino paradise. Findings reveal that emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in allowing employees to cope with environmental demands and pressures successfully. Our results demonstrate that job satisfaction and occupational commitment can relieve the turnover intention of employees. Additionally, we investigated the moderating effect of an internal service climate (ISC) that is an organizational contextual factor (including psychological environment and re-sources available for employees). Our findings suggest that when the ISC is high, satisfied and committed employees have lower turnover intentions. ISC offers a well-being and supportive environment that helps bring down the turnover intention in the very stressful service industry. Our study recommends that companies should provide a positive ISC for employees to reduce turnover intension among employees.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, internal service climate, turnover intension, tourism

INTRODUCTION

Macau was a former Portuguese colony and now acts as a Special Administrative Region in China and is the largest gambling center in the world¹. In 2018 Macau employed more than 100,000 workers (O'Connor, 2019); unsurprisingly it is extremely important for Macau's economy. The purpose of this paper is to examine factors associated with one of the most challenging issues: turnover intention in the casino

industry. While research on turnover intention is some of the most robust literature, each industry has unique working conditions and unique stressors (e.g., Lee and Kim, 2020), such as nurses (Labrague *et al.*, 2020), teachers (Addai *et al.*, 2018), and even alcohol treatment workers (McEntee *et al.*, 2021). The same is true for the distinctive sample of front-line casino workers, who face concerns about morality (Lai *et al.*, 2013), job requirements, and the ability to regulate emotional suppression among gambling customers (Taormina and Kuok, 2009).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been argued to reduce turnover (Demir, 2011; Mohammad *et al.*, 2014), emotional exhaustion (Carson *et al.*, 2000), and withdrawal (Carmeli, 2003). However, this conclusion is not beyond dispute. Lee and Woo (2015) found that EI can actually increase turnover and Saeed *et al.* (2014) suggested that EI does not affect turnover as individuals with greater adaptability dare to face uncertainty (Mohammad *et al.*, 2014). We argue that whether the high EI employee departs depends on two important individual-level intermediate variables: occupational commitment and job satisfaction.

Organizational factors are also proposed to explain turnover intention, including training, benefits, organizational support, supervisory support, employment opportunities (Alkahtani, 2015), and justice (Oluwafemi, 2013). Organizational climate theory explores how the corporate environment or human resource management affects individual behaviors (Hofmann *et al.*, 2003; Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999). This paper will use internal service climate as an organizational-level mediator factor that affects turnover intention (Paulin *et al.*, 1978; Wong *et al.*, 2019).

Our paper's gap and contribution are highlighted in-part above by the unique nature of the location and industry and the ramifications for the Macau economy. Our sample size of 1,236 casino employees across 29 organizations, collected face-to-face using a purposive sampling approach, allows for a generalizable conclusion. Additionally, by providing findings from China, we further expand the geographical scope of turnover research, which has been examined in Canada (Greenham *et al.*, 2019), Europe (Van der Heijden *et al.*, 2018), Ghana (Addai *et al.*, 2018), the United States (Edwards-Dandridge *et al.*, 2020), and the Philippines (Labrague *et al.*, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Turnover intention, “a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization” (Tett and Meyer, 1993, p. 262), continues to receive significant attention due to its importance on turnover behavior for a century (Hom *et al.*, 2017, Griffeth *et al.*, 2000; Yanchus *et al.*, 2017). There are many theories that have tried to explain factors associated with employee turnover; according to Hom *et al.* (2017) these include the Intermediate Linkage Model (Mobley, 1977), the Complex Causal Model of Determinants and Intervening Factors (Price and Mueller, 1981), the Unfolding Theory Model (Lee and Mitchell, 1994), the influence of Organizational Turnover Antecedents (Shaw *et al.*, 1998), the Job Embeddedness Construct model (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001), the Movement Capital Model (Trevor, 2001), the Influential HR Practice-Turnover Model, (Batt, 2002), the Turnover and Performance Model (Shaw *et al.*, 2005), the Turnover's Conceptual Domain Model (Hom *et al.*, 2012), and the Organizational/Collective Turnover Model (Heavey *et al.*, 2013; Park and Shaw, 2013). In sum, these theories either examine such individual-level variables (e.g., demographics, personality, perception of the organization) or organizational factors (e.g., the work environment, culture). This paper will focus on both levels. At the individual level we investigate emotional intelligence, job commitment, and job satisfaction. As the organizational level, we argue that internal service climate will be an important mediator in explaining the turnover intention for the extremely stressful Casino and Tourist industry in Macau (Wong *et al.*, 2019).

Emotional Intelligence (EI), Occupational Commitment, and Job Satisfaction

An occupation is “an identifiable and specific line of work that an individual engages in to earn a living at a given point in time (e.g., nurse, banker, clerk). It is made up of a constellation of requisite skills, knowledge, and duties that differentiate it from other occupations and, typically, is transferrable across settings.” Occupational commitment, then, represents “a psychological link between a person and his or her occupation that is based on an affective reaction to that occupation” (Lee *et al.*, 2000, p. 800). Occupational

commitment is important to research and society, as it helps us understand whether certain societal industries will survive, whether expertise will continue to exist or be lost, and how individuals make sense of their commitments and identities (e.g., Lee *et al.*, 2000). In considering Macau's reliance on this particular industry, understanding casino worker's occupational commitment is paramount.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as "the set of abilities (verbal and nonverbal) that enable a person to generate, recognize, express, understand, and evaluate their own, and others, emotions in order to guide thinking and action that successfully cope with environmental demands and pressures" (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004, p. 72). After its initial development (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Salovey and Mayer, 1990), the construct has been assessed in a variety of industries and occupations and theorized to affect outcomes including leadership effectiveness (Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005), social loafing behaviors (Prati *et al.*, 2003), and even interview success (Fox and Spector, 2000). It has also been demonstrated to explain unique predictive validity beyond already established constructs (e.g., Lenaghan *et al.*, 2007; Rode *et al.*, 2007).

There is reason to believe that emotional intelligence can predict occupational commitment. Coetzee and Harry (2014) argued and demonstrated that EI positively affects career adaptability. Career adaptability is made up of concern, control, confidence, and curiosity (Savickas, 2005). Broadly, these capacities demonstrate an individual's ability to take personal responsibility for career decisions, an ability to gain new knowledge and insights into their career, and a confidence in skills and abilities related to that career. Additionally, research indicates that high EI enhances many characteristics of commitment, such as identifying goals and missions (Mayer *et al.*, 2004), making meaningful and positive predictions (Mayer *et al.*, 2004), having interest in career contemplation and exploration (Emmerling and Cherniss, 2003; Young *et al.*, 1997), and seeking development and success (Amilin, 2016; Carson and Carson, 1998). Additionally, many obstructive moods and feelings which weaken occupational commitment can be dissolved by high emotional intelligence, including anxiety, stress, and burnout (Yetgin and Benligiray, 2019). Finally, Ouerdian *et al.* (2021) found out EI affects organizational commitment and identifies occupational commitment as an intermediate factor between EI and turnover intention in Tunisia.

Taken together and given the similarity in these constructs and the general attitudes and behaviors they represent, we argue that emotional intelligence should similarly predict occupational commitment:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional intelligence is positively related to occupational commitment.

Job satisfaction is a widely discussed multi-dimensional construct whose definition is particularly problematic (Mumford, 1972). Plainly, it reflects how employees perceive their job and impacts behaviors, including attendance, turnover, retirement decisions, and organizational citizenship behaviors (see Judge and Klinger, 2008). We expect emotional intelligence to have a particularly robust relationship with job satisfaction as the service sector requires significant interaction with coworkers and customers (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2011), and EI should allow employees to find this job both manageable and even perhaps enjoyable.

In one test of this relationship, Sony and Mekoth (2016) found that all three facets of EI had a positive effect on frontline employee (FLE) adaptability. To elaborate, emotional intelligence is composed of three factors – (a) an individual's ability to perform a self-emotional appraisal, (b) an individual's ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others, and (c) an individual's ability to make constructive use of their emotions. Each was shown to be related to FLE adaptability, which is broadly defined as being attributes that allow them to be flexible to the environment, stakeholders, and situations (see Sony and Mekoth, 2014, for a greater discussion on the seven dimensions of FLE adaptability). FLE adaptability was then demonstrated to have a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Outside of the service sector, Carmeli (2003) found support for the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among senior managers. Other research has similarly supported the linkage (Ealias and George, 2012; Hendee, 2002; Khan *et al.*, 2017; Pandey and Sharma, 2016; Sony and Mekoth, 2016; Navas and Vijayakumar, 2018; Shukla *et al.*, 2016; Sy *et al.*, 2006). This relationship makes sense as individuals high in emotional intelligence also have higher life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, sense of adaptability, subjective happiness, engagement, and well-being (Naseem, 2018; Sony

and Mekoth, 2016; Szczygiel and Mikolajczak, 2017), which is related to or tangential to job satisfaction. Following these conclusions, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence is positively related to job satisfaction.

Both occupational commitment and job satisfaction are individual psychological responses to a job. Scholars have argued and demonstrated a positive correlation between a meaningful occupation, goals, and job satisfaction (Emmons and Kaiser, 1996; Lu *et al.*, 2019; Spence *et al.*, 2004). Thus, job satisfaction does not generate from finishing a workday but from achieving a long-term occupational goal. People tend to select jobs that best match their perceived abilities and interests (Edwards, 1991; Super, 1953; Wilk *et al.*, 1995). It is, therefore, unsurprising that research has been largely positive on the relationship between occupational commitment and job satisfaction, as confirmed in various studies (Aryee *et al.*, 1994; Meyer *et al.*, 1993; Landsman, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2012) and in the meta-analysis conducted by Lee *et al.* (2000). Occupational commitment can affect employees' staying decisions (Weng and McElroy, 2012). We hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Occupational commitment has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Intuitively, commitment involves the degree of willingness to maintain (Fu, 2011; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978) and attach to a relationship (Rusbult, 1983; Colarelli and Bishop, 1990). It then makes sense that occupational commitment can affect employees' staying decisions (Lazar, 2005; Weng and McElroy, 2012). While it may be intuitive for organizational commitment to affect turnover intention at an individual organization, occupational commitment needs a broader lens. It is plausible that individuals would be willing to leave sub-par organizations but stay in their occupation and pursue vocational growth if they have access to similar career, promotion, and compensation opportunities upon leaving (Weng and McElroy, 2012).

Despite these concerns, most of the literature tends to be unidirectional, supporting a negative relationship between occupational commitment and turnover variables. These include a negative relationship between occupational commitment and turnover intentions (Blau, 1989; Kim, 2002; Chang *et al.*, 2007; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005), as well as related outcomes such as career withdrawal intentions (Aryee *et al.*, 1994), burnout (Engelberg *et al.*, 2009; Sawada, 2009) and exhaustion (Raiziene and Endriulaitiene, 2007). Thus, while it is plausible that an unsatisfactory organization or external factors could spur changes, the totality of evidence seems to support a negative relationship between occupational commitment and turnover intention. Therefore, testing this hypothesis may help provide unique insights into the relationship between occupational commitment and turnover intention even when other opportunities are available. We will further expand on this possibility in discussing hypothesis 6 and the buffering effect of internal service climate.

Hypothesis 4: Occupational commitment is negatively related to turnover intention.

Lower job satisfaction is constantly theorized and demonstrated as increasing turnover (Griffeth *et al.*, 2000) or turnover intention (Addai *et al.*, 2018; Cohen *et al.*, 2015; Labrague *et al.*, 2020). Previous research on casino employees in Macau has found a converse effect – that higher job satisfaction actually increases turnover intention (Wang *et al.*, 2016). The authors argued that perhaps the wide availability of job opportunities in the area or dissatisfaction with shift schedules might be the culprits. In order to find out the relationship, we introduced the moderating effect of internal service climate. Hypotheses six and seven are proposed in the next section. We use the most popular and traditional hypotheses on the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Hypothesis 5: Job satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intention.

The Moderating Effect of Internal Service Climate

Organizational contextual factors may be more influential on turnover intention than individual factors (Oluwafemi, 2013). For example, Cohen *et al.* (2015) found that satisfaction with remote working arrangements negatively affects turnover rates and Yanchus *et al.* (2017) found that supportive work environments may similarly help, while high workloads and poor work-life balance may lead to higher intentions (McEntee *et al.*, 2021). Many studies investigate both individual- and organizational-level factors when assessing turnover intention (e.g., Van der Heijden *et al.*, 2018).

We argue that a particularly salient organizational factor is internal service climate. Internal service climate reflects how employees perceive management and the policies and procedures of an organization (Yang and Wang, 2010). Following the lead of Wong *et al.* (2019) in their investigation of casino workers, we rely on Paulin *et al.* (2006, p. 907), who argue that an internal service climate “depends on foundation issues present in the work context (quality of services received from co-workers and other departments) and on general facilitative condition” that allows for employees to provide greater service. A more positive climate (Wong *et al.*, 2019, p. 128) “generally creates a supportive and friendly atmosphere that allows an organization’s members to realize their career prospects and potential capabilities.”

While Wong *et al.* (2019) investigated internal service climate’s effect on individual level factors (Wong *et al.*, 2019), investigations into internal service climate are more often concerned with external or organizational outcomes, such as customer satisfaction or evaluations (Jia *et al.*, 2016; Kralj and Solnet, 2010). This is intuitive given the previous description. So why would internal service climate have a moderating effect from both job satisfaction and occupational commitment when considering turnover intention?

To reiterate, most literature finds a negative relationship between occupational commitment and turnover intentions (Blau, 1989; Chang *et al.*, 2007; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005; Zhou *et al.*, 2009). However, unlike organizational commitment, occupational commitment does not require loyalty to a specific organization, but rather the field as a whole. Especially when considering casino employees with an abundance of similar organizations in the surrounding area, employees who wish to stay in their occupation but leave their specific organization have those opportunities available. This is important to consider in theories of turnover. For example, the causal model of voluntary turnover (Price, 2004, p. 6) argued opportunity choices significantly affected the likelihood of turnover, where opportunity is defined as “the number of jobs in the environment.”

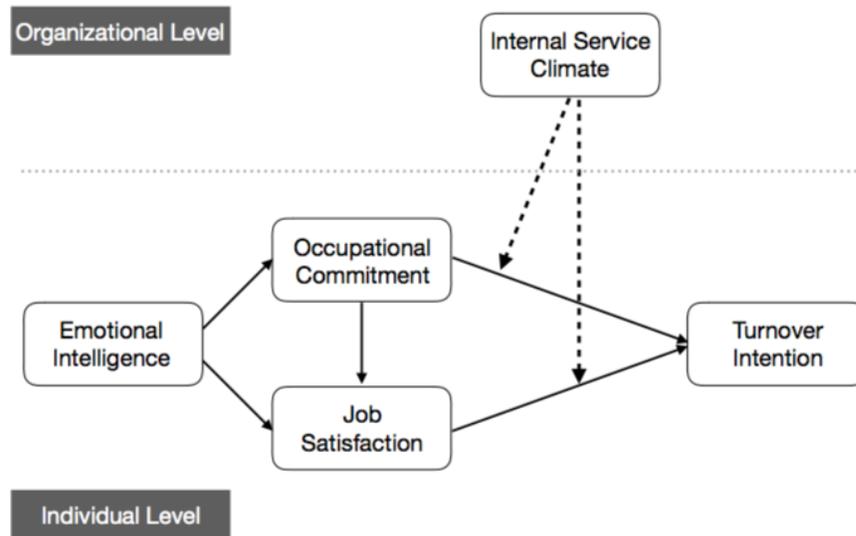
When opportunity is abundant, individual organizational characteristics may be particularly salient. Internal service climate assesses those characteristics of the specific organization that are perhaps independent of the occupation, such as the helpfulness of coworkers, the perceived thoughtfulness of managers, and the overall perception of the working environment (Hallowell *et al.*, 1996). If employees do not find these levels to be acceptable, they have available options in the sector. Conversely, positive perceptions should reduce turnover intention. To support this conclusion, empirically, there has been indirect evidence for a relationship between a high internal service climate and turnover intention among teachers in Israel (Eldor and Shoshani, 2017).

It is also unsurprising that internal service has found to have a positive effect on employee job satisfaction (Chen, 2022; Fitwi and Abdissa, 2016; Hallowell *et al.*, 1996) and employee psychological empowerment (Dimitriades and Maroudas, 2007). When considering a multi-factor model of job satisfaction for front-line employees, components include satisfaction with organizational policies, autonomy, interactions, and task requirements (Stamps, 1998). Our paper views internal service climate as a buffer in the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. Plainly, employees who enjoy their job, and also believe that policies and procedures are reasonable, and managers and coworkers are agreeable, are less likely to intend to leave their job. Taken together, these conclusions lead to the final hypotheses. Figure 1 shows the totality of our proposed interactions.

Hypothesis 6: *The negative relationship between occupational commitment and turnover intention is moderated by internal service climate. The relationship is weaker (vs. stronger) for employees within casino properties with a high (vs. low) internal service climate.*

Hypothesis 7: *The negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention is moderated by internal service climate in that the relationship is weaker (vs. stronger) for employees within casino properties with high (vs. low) internal service climate.*

FIGURE 1
PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



METHODS

This manuscript uses the same population as a previously published manuscript but the majority of constructs are unique to this manuscript and all hypothesized relationships among variables are original. Data was collected in Macau, a major gambling city. Twenty-nine casinos participated. We focused on front-line casino employees because front- and back-of-house employees have different expectations and requirements (Thomas *et al.*, 2017). Trained investigators administered the questionnaire through an interview. We originally collected 1,251 responses.

A judgmental sampling approach with filter questions were utilized to ensure that participants qualified as appropriate employees for the study. Four survey coordinators, each of whom was a graduate or senior undergraduate business student, went into the casinos to collect data via questionnaires over a 4-month period. Participants were able to complete the questionnaire in English or Chinese. The questionnaire was originally developed in English and then translated into Chinese. This translation to Chinese was done by one of the authors, and then it was subsequently translated back into English by a professional translator as well as one of the authors of this study who was particularly familiar with the service industry. To ensure the accuracy of wording and to assess the reliability of scales, a pilot study with over 100 participants was conducted, and edits were made accordingly. Respondents were able to complete the questionnaire at a time convenient during their workday.

Fifteen responses were excluded due to incomplete answers and extreme outliers. The sample represents the population well, including both local casinos and large integrated resorts based on international brands. The sample also well-represented several different functional areas of casino operations, including customer service, food and beverage services, cage, casino hosting, table games, and slot machines, among others. The surveyed population was roughly 52% male. 48% of participants were between the ages of 26 and 35, and 29% were between 36 and 45. About 64% of respondents had graduated from high school, and over 21% had received some college education. The duration of their employment

in the same position was distributed evenly between 1–2 years (25.7%), 3–5 years (28.8%), and 6–10 years (24.0%). For over 58% of respondents, monthly income ranged from 10,000 to 19,999 MOP (1 USD = 8.0 MOP).

Measures

All scale items were derived from the literature and demonstrated adequate reliability and validity, as indicated in Table 1 below, which includes descriptive statistics for each construct. All items were evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 unless otherwise specified. Table 1 below provides additional insight on the measures.

**TABLE 1
LIST OF ADAPTED MEASURES AND THEIR RELIABILITY**

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	.94	.93	0.55
<i>Occupational Commitment</i>	.83	.85	0.56
<i>Job Satisfaction</i>	.85	.85	0.54
<i>Internal Service Climate</i>	.91	.91	0.62
<i>Turnover Intention</i>	.81	.81	-

Emotional Intelligence (EI) was adopted from a 16-item scale by Wong and Law (2002). A sample question is: “I have a good understanding of my own emotions.”

Job Satisfaction was adapted from a 4-item scale by Smith *et al.* (1969). A sample question is: “I feel good about my job.”

Turnover Intention was assessed using a 3-item scale adapted from Cammann *et al.* (1979) and Kyndt *et al.* (2009). A sample question is: “How likely is it that you would change your job within the next year?”

Occupational Commitment was assessed via a 6-item scale adapted by Meyer *et al.* (1993). An example item is: “I am proud to be in this occupation.”

Internal Service Climate was measured on a 6-item scale adopted by Wong *et al.* (2019). An example item is: “The management are very thoughtful and caring for staff needs.” We followed the literature by aggregating the measure at the organizational level. Accordingly, we diagnosed its appropriateness for data aggregation based on inter-rater reliabilities with ICC(1) = .42 and ICC(2) = .92 as well as the inter-rater agreement with median rwg = .92. These statistics warrant data aggregation at a higher level.

Because of concerns over common method bias (CMB), we followed recommendations from the literature (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) and conducted further analysis. In Harman’s one-factor analysis, the variance explained by a single factor was less than 50%. Additionally, the marker-variable method was used to partially variance a theoretically unrelated variable. In this application, we adopted depersonalization, a three-item measure originally developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), to be included in the model. Upon inclusion of the variable, the results suggested that the proposed relationships did not change in significance. The diagnostic procedures offered here provide support for the reliability of our findings without being subject to the major influence of CMB. To identify possible collinearity issues, multicollinearity diagnostics were performed. As a result of variance inflation factors (VIFs), the study found that there was no VIF exceeding 3.0, suggesting that collinearity was not a major limitation of the study.

The proposed model suggests that individual employee characteristics and behaviors are shaped within a casino. Hence, internal service quality is posited to exercise cross-level moderating effect on the

individual-level relationships. Due to the nested nature of the model, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was employed, further supported by the analysis of variance (ANOVA) that acknowledged the significance of the mediating and dependent variables with $F(28, 1207) \geq 3.09$ ($p < .001$), while inter-class correlation coefficients (ICC) for these variables were greater than the .05 threshold (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). We controlled for gender and tenure as they influence employee perceptions and behaviors (Jung *et al.*, 2012). Given that several mediations were superimposed in the model, a serial mediation analysis using the Hayes PROCESS procedure with a bootstrapping technique using a 5,000 sample was conducted. The confidence interval (CI) was set to 95%, while Model 6 was employed.

RESULTS

The preliminary description of univariate analysis and bivariate analysis is presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATION MATRIX

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Occupational commitment	3.79	1.12	(.83/.86)				
2. Emotional intelligence	4.20	1.05	.73***	(.94/.93)			
3. Job satisfaction	4.01	1.08	.66***	.68***	(.85/.85)		
4. Turnover intention	2.96	1.24	-.26***	-.25***	-.08***	(.81/.81)	
5. Internal service quality	3.94	1.22	.72***	.75***	.73***	-.22***	(.91/.91)
6. Tenure	3.36	1.33	.19***	.18***	.08**	.00	.08**

Noted: ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Values presented on the diagonal are *Cronbach's alpha / composite reliability*.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 propose a relationship between EI to OC and JS. Results from Table 3 shown below (i.e., Models 1 and 2) reveal that both were supported at the .001 level.

Results also support Hypothesis 3 (occupational commitment to job satisfaction) at the .001 level. Hypotheses 4 and 5 posit relationships leading from occupational commitment and job satisfaction to turnover intention. Results from Model 3 provide support at the .05 level. Results of the indirect effect of emotional intelligence through occupational commitment alone, through job satisfaction alone, and through both occupational commitment and job satisfaction are all significant. Results from the Hayes Process Procedure indicate a significant serial mediating effect between emotional intelligence and turnover intention (emotional intelligence → occupation commitment → job satisfaction → turnover intention $b = -.076$ ($p < .001$, 95% CI = [-.117, -.040])).

Hypotheses 6 and 7 postulate a cross-level moderation of ISC on the occupational commitment-turnover intention and job satisfaction-turnover intention linkages. Results from Model 4 reveal a negative moderating effect of ISC on the two relationships at the .001 level. To illustrate the interactions, we used the simple slope approach to divide the mediators and the moderator into plus/minus one standard deviation from the mean.

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF HIERARCHICAL LINEAR MODELING ESTIMATES

	Model 1 Occupational Commitment	Model 2 Job Satis- faction	Model 3 Turnover In- tention	Model 4 Turnover In- tention
<i>Control</i>				
Gender			.04	.00
Tenure			-.09*	-.07*
<i>Main effects</i>				
Emotional intelligence (EI)	.69***	.42***	--	--
Occupational commitment (OC)		.21***	-.43*	-.05
Job satisfaction			-.20*	-.34***
<i>Cross-level Moderating effects</i>				
Internal service climate (ISC)				-.01
OC × ISQ				-.49***
Job satisfaction × ISQ				-.23***
R ²	.37	.38	.08	.20
ΔR ²		.01		.12

Noted: † p < .10, * p < .05, *** p < .001.
Parameter estimates are unstandardized.

Figure 2 depicts that turnover intention was significantly reduced in the high ISC condition while it was increased in the low ISC condition. The significant negative effect of occupational commitment on turnover intention (Model 3) vanished when the moderation of ISC was controlled (Model 4). These combined findings suggest that although one's occupational commitment could reduce their desire to leave an organization, it does not shield against quitting intention for firms with a poor ISC.

Figure 3 depicts the job satisfaction × internal service climate interaction (ISC). Results illustrate that the negative effect of job satisfaction on turnover intention is more salient for employees within organizations with high ISC. In other words, the boundary condition of ISC is particularly effective in mitigating employee turnover intention with a high level of job satisfaction when organizations manifest efforts in ISC.

FIGURE 2
OCCUPATIONAL COMMITMENT × INTERNAL SERVICE CLIMATE INTERACTION ON
TURNOVER INTENTION

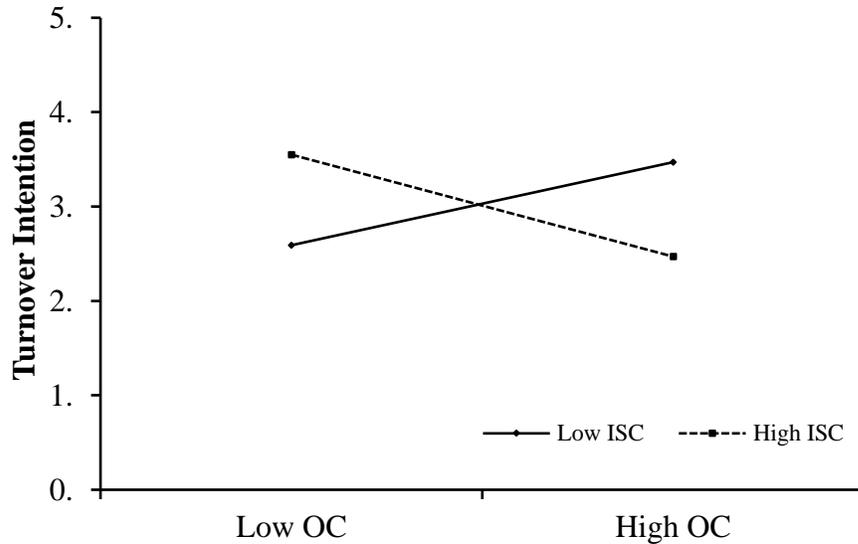


FIGURE 3
JOB SATISFACTION × INTERNAL SERVICE CLIMATE INTERACTION ON
TURNOVER INTENTION



DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our findings demonstrate that job satisfaction and occupational commitment can relieve the high emotionally intelligent (EI) employee’s turnover intention. This study also highlights the moderating effects of the internal service climate (ISC). Our findings suggest that when ISC is high, satisfied and committed employees have lower turnover intention. ISC offers a psychological environment (Schneider, 1975) and a resource for employees (Lam *et al.*, 2010). Our research also furthers the conclusion that employees with

higher occupational commitment tend to have lower turnover rates, even in industries with high turnover rates such as the casino industry.

Theoretical Implications

Theories on turnover intention tend to either examine either individual-level variables as or variables at the job/organizational level. At the individual level we investigated emotional intelligence, job commitment, and job satisfaction. As the organizational level, we argued that internal service climate would be an important mediator in explaining the turnover intention. The conclusions support the conclusion that both pathways are integral to reducing turnover intention.

Specifically, in the workplace and in their career, employees evaluate themselves on their own ability and desire to remain in that occupation, and whether they are satisfied at their present job. If absent, the relation between EI and turnover has been mixed, at times showing a negative relationship (e.g., Demir, 2011; Mohammad *et al.*, 2014), a positive relationship (e.g., Lee and Woo, 2015), or no effect (e.g., Saeed *et al.*, 2014). Our findings shed light on this particular relationship in the Macau casino industry.

Our conclusions also corroborate the findings of Thomas *et al.*, (2017) who found that occupational commitment was a significant predictor of employee retention in the casino industry. The study surveyed a sample of casino employees in the United States and found that those who reported higher levels of occupational commitment were more likely to remain employed with the same organization. Similarly, Rasheed *et al.*, (2020) found that occupational commitment was negatively associated with turnover intentions among casino employees. The study surveyed a sample of casino employees in Macau and found that those who reported higher levels of occupational commitment were less likely to express intentions to leave their current job. Taken together this gives greater confidence in conclusions regarding predictors of turnover intention in the hospitality, particularly the casino, industry.

Practical Implications

Occupational commitment is clearly important to reducing turnover intention. At an organizational level, to promote feelings of occupational commitment, consider offering opportunities for employee growth and supporting a work-family culture (Major *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, given the importance of co-worker relationships in supporting occupational commitment, specific attention given to the social integration of newcomers may be particularly effective (Nägele and Neuenschwander, 2014). Organizations may also seek to invest in emotional intelligence training for employees, such as training related to self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, which can lead to a decrease in turnover rates.

Employees with high levels of emotional intelligence may offer a competitive advantage for an organization (Stoyanova-Bozhkova *et al.*, 2022). Given that emotional intelligence may play a part in affecting guest emotions (Assiouras *et al.*, 2023) and the linkage between service personnel etiquette and customer emotions (Hsiao *et al.*, 2022), top management support is paramount in supporting emotional intelligence developmental opportunities. Employers should seek to create a positive work environment and prioritize employee engagement as they are often highly related. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for employee recognition, promoting a healthy work-life balance, and fostering open communication and collaboration among employees. Allow employees to actively participate in decision-making processes and create an environment where employees feel valued and supported.

Limitations and Future Research

Turnover intention is assumed a reasonable predictor of actual turnover behavior – a conclusion supported by the meta-analysis conducted by Griffeth *et al.*, (2000) that reported a significant relationship. However, a limitation of our study is perhaps the limited predictive power of this implied relationship (Cohen *et al.*, 2015; Griffeth *et al.*, 2000). Future research is needed to continue our proposed model by utilizing a longitudinal study that tracks not only individual attitudes, but their ultimate behaviors as well. While a concern, portions of a primary predictor investigated in this study, job satisfaction, was reported to affect both constructs (turnover and turnover intent), in the Cohen *et al.*, (2015) study.

We used Wong and Law's (2002) measure of emotional intelligence. However, EI has been measured

through a variety of tools (see O’Boyle *et al.*, 2011 for a review) and different measures may have affected results. Our study is also limited to conclusions regarding casinos in the hospitality sector in Asia and may not necessarily generalize elsewhere – though the data did represent 29 different organizations to try to mitigate organization-specific biases. In regards to our analysis, we controlled for gender and tenure in this study due to influences on emotional intelligence from previous literature (Jung *et al.*, 2012; Shapoval, 2019; Stami *et al.*, 2018). Other variables, such as age and level of education might also be important for controlling in future EI investigative work (Stami *et al.*, 2018).

Given the wide number of respondents (1,236) and the high quantity of casinos surveyed (29), our findings are largely generalizable to this industry and location. Our findings extend other studies conducted that similarly examined casino employees (Chan and Ao, 2019; Lai *et al.*, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2017; Taormina and Kuok, 2009; Wang *et al.*, 2016; Wong *et al.*, 2019). When placed together, significant conclusions can be drawn regarding notable outcome variables for this industry. Many of these studies, including ours, investigated turnover intention. One of the more novel contributions made in this manuscript is the addition of occupational commitment specifically. A natural progression may be the relevant outcome variable - investigation into not just organizational turnover intent, but perhaps also occupational turnover intent (an individual leaving an industry entirely), such as explored by Van der Heijden *et al.* (2018) in their study of nurses. Finally, assumptions about the nature of the front-line casino occupation could shift in coming years due to shifts towards immersive experiences (Li *et al.*, 2022), resulting in a need to continually revisit these conclusions or explore expanded outcomes.

ENDNOTE

1. “Global gambling in recent years”, available at <https://www.casino.org/features/gambling-statistics/> (accessed 18 January 2023).

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